

Swedish writers, teacher's guide

Dear Colleagues!

In this exercise the students will be able to practice different skills. The selections of goals, which function as guidelines for the lessons context and structure, are taken from the Swedish school's curriculum for the Swedish subject.

- The school should strive to develop students' desire to learn by reading literature.
- The school should strive to develop the students' desire to create and interpret texts.
- The students' should develop their language so that they can, want to and dare to express themselves in different ways and in different contexts.
- The students should be able to read actively and express their thoughts, feelings, experiences, reflections, interpretations and values through speech and writing.

This exercise shall:

- develop the students desire to learn about literature and culture,
- trigger students' interests in regards to questions concerning Swedish society's values,
- support the students so that they understand the purpose and characteristics of a text,
- stimulate the student to active reading which they find meaningful,
- develop the students abilities to interpret, critically examine and evaluate different texts.
 - develop the students ability to express their thoughts, feelings, experiences, reflections, interpretations and values through speech and writing.

Preparations

1. Copy the texts and the exercises and distribute them to the students.
2. Prior to the work with the **Astrid Lindgren** texts, speak to the students about what they already know about Sweden. Maybe someone in your group has visited Sweden and can share a little about this visit or their encounters with the country and its inhabitants. Discuss what they think or know about Swedish nature, climate, music, cities, famous swedes, political ruling, food, literature, traditions etc. The aim is to awaken an interest towards Swedish culture and to answer and discuss any questions that might arise.
3. Before starting the work with the poems by **Karin Boye**, kindly speak to the students about what it is like to be young. What is it like to try to find your own identity at the same time as it feels important to be part of a group and not be secluded from a group? To whom can you talk about your thoughts about things that might be embarrassing or that you would want to keep to yourself? How, for example, does advertisement affect the way we view ourselves and others? How do you become strong and dare to go a different way/stand up for who you are? Can other people's texts help you to become stronger and dare to do more? What is important in life?
Select and formulate your own questions that you know fit the group. The aim is to awaken the students' interest prior to the work with Boye's poems.
One of the goals with the exercise is to stimulate the students to active reading, which they also regard as valuable. This means that they should also be able to connect to the text on a personal level. This should motivate the students to, on an individual level, express themselves, their thoughts and feelings through speech and writing.
4. Prior to the work with **Stig Dagermans** novel, speak to the students about how a writer can create thrill through different writing techniques. For example, what does the title of this novel tell us? The aim is to open the eyes of the students so that they become more observant on how the writer works technically with his texts, for example; how does he create thrill, how pictures are portrayed and how the reader is forced to feel sympathy for certain characters in the story.

Work

When the students have read the specific text you are going to work with, there are different exercises connected to each text. These exercises are on two different difficulty levels. The first level is more basic and the second on a more advanced level. The thought behind the exercises is to let all students complete the work on the basic level and that the students who need a bigger challenge should then move on to the exercises on the advanced level. The work can be done both individually or in groups. If you choose to let them work in groups, the questions can be used as a base for discussion. The students should then document their discussions and present them to the rest of the class.

Swedish writers

During the next couple of lessons we are going to work with Swedish literature, where we will encounter three famous Swedish writers. The aim of the lessons will be that you as a student, shall not only become familiar with different writers ways of writing and delivering their message, but also receive knowledge about Swedish culture and traditions.

Lesson goals

As a student you should

- be familiar with some Swedish writers, their work, Swedish culture and the values that are brought forward in their work,
- develop your ability to understand the aims and characteristics of a text,
- develop your ability to read actively and connect personally to a text,
- develop your ability to interpret, approach critically and evaluate different texts,
- develop your own ability to express your thoughts, feelings, experiences, interpretations, evaluations and reflections through both speech and writing.

Work

After a short introduction you are going to be reading a text. Each text is followed by exercises, which you will work with in different ways. Follow the instructions given to every exercise.

Have in mind the goals for each exercise as you work with them. This makes it easier for you to focus on the right tasks connected to your work.

Astrid Lindgren

Hur vi firar jul i Bullerbyn (1949)

(ur: *Mera om oss barn i Bullerbyn*, Raben & Sjögren, 2001).

Christmas in Noisy Village (1963)

Weihnachten in Bullerbü (1963)

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In Noisy Village there are three farms, North Farm, Middle Farm, and South Farm. Everyone calls the farms Noisy Village because there are so many children around making noise all the time.

Britta and Anna live at North Farm, Karl and Bill and I live at Middle Farm, and Olaf and his little sister, Kerstin, live at South Farm.

Christmas is a happy time, especially in Noisy Village. Even the sparrows are happy because we put up sheaves of oats for them, and for the bullfinches too, of course, and all the other little hungry birds.

We children enjoy Christmas even more than the sparrows do. I'm going to tell you what we did last Christmas in Noisy Village.

Three days before Christmas we baked gingersnaps. It was great fun, almost as good as Christmas Eve. You could smell gingersnaps all over Noisy Village.

"This cookie smell is the kind I like," Karl said. He made nineteen gingersnap pigs and I made fourteen and Bill made eleven. We made hearts and stars too.

All of us children have to help with the work at Christmas time. We spent one whole day bringing in firewood on our old sled.

"We can't possibly burn up all this wood," Olaf said suddenly. "This is more than enough."

He only said that because he was lazy and didn't want to work any longer. But then his mother said, "We can't have any lazybones around in the middle of the Christmas rush. Everybody has to help."

Not Kerstin, of course. She just rode on top of the load of wood and had a fine time. But then, she's still very little.

The day before Christmas Eve we went out to the woods to cut Christmas trees. We need four Christmas trees in Noisy Village – one for North Farm, one for Middle Farm, one for South Farm, and then Grandfather has a little tree of his very own.

My daddy cut all the trees but Grandfather's. Karl cut that one, and Britta and Anna pulled it home on their sled.

Skip, Olaf's dog, met us on the way home, and he barked at Olaf.

"That's because I wouldn't let him come along to the woods," Olaf said.

The evening before Christmas Eve we went around to all the houses in Noisy Village and sang Christmas carols outside the windows.

"God bless the master of the house,
God bless the mistress too,"

We sang.

At every house we made a snow lantern by piling snowballs in a cone shape, with a candle burning inside. All the lanterns glowed in the dark.

"Everything is so beautiful and Christmasy that it gives me a stomach-ache," said Anna.

When I went to bed that night I was worried. I was sure our mother wouldn't get everything done on time. We won't have much of a Christmas this year, I thought.

But what did I see when I woke up on Christmas Eve? There in the living room stood the tree, all decorated, and a fire was crackling in the fireplace and everything was beautiful!

Christmas Eve is the longest day of the whole year!

"All those hours you have to wait for your Christmas presents are what turn your hair gray," Karl said.

Last year it snowed all day. We put on our Santa Claus caps and ran over with some presents for Britta and Anna and Olaf and Kerstin and looked at their Christmas trees. Everything was so pretty!

Anna and Britta were wrapping their Christmas presents and fastening the paper with sealing wax, and their whole house smelled of sealing wax.

We always eat a lot here on Christmas Eve. We sit around the big kitchen table and eat and eat – ham and sausages and head cheese and Christmas fish and rice porridge and lots of other things.

"Everyone has to make up a rhyme about the rice porridge," Daddy said. "You have to do that on Christmas Eve."

Bill's rhyme was the best:

I've eaten so much I can't eat any more

Because if I do I can't get through the door.

But Karl said, "That's the worst rhyme I've ever heard in my life."

When we'd finished supper we sat in the living room while Daddy read to us about the Christ Child in the manger, and afterward we sang "Silent Night, Holy Night."

Then Karl shouted, "Look, here comes Santa Claus!" We all ran to the window and looked out, and there in the darkness came Santa Claus with his sleigh loaded with gifts. He carried a lantern to light his way.

"I feel all shivery inside," said Bill.

"I don't," Karl said. "Now we'll get our Christmas presents. What's shivery about that?"

I got ever so many presents, even more than I had wished for. Then we danced around the tree. Everyone in Noisy Village came to our house and danced around our tree – Grandfather, too, except that he didn't dance. He just sat still and kept on saying, "My, oh my!" The rest of us danced and sang all the more. "Christmas is here again," we sang.

And then we cracked nuts and ate oranges and almond candy.

Next morning we got up at six o'clock and went to church.

"Guess what I like?" Karl said. "I like riding in a sleigh by torchlight."

"Guess what I like?" Bill said. "I like sleigh bells and the smell of horses."

"Guess what I like?" I said. "I like Christmas."

"Well, of course," Karl said. "Everybody likes Christmas!"

When we got home from church we all took the skis we'd got for Christmas, and our toboggans, and went skiing and tobogganing all day.



Olaf had got a pair of skates, so he went skating down on the pond all by himself.

That evening we went to a Christmas party at Britta's and Anna's house. We played Blind Man's Buff and bobbed for apples and had a wonderful time.

Kerstin climbed up and sat on the table because she was a little afraid of the Blind Man. But she certainly wasn't afraid when we had fruit cake and tarts to eat!

Oh, isn't Christmas a jolly time? I wish it would come oftener, don't you?

Text and author: *How we celebrate Christmas in Noisy Village* by Astrid Lindgren

- Exercises:**
- 1. Present a text**
 - 2. Present an author**
-

Exercise 1. Written presentation of the story

You are now going to write about the text you just read. It is important that you plan your presentation before you get started. The questions below should be used as support for your work. You decide in which order you want to present the answers to the questions, but don't forget that they should be written as a flowing text. A flowing text means that the text should be coherent and divided into paragraphs.

Level 1

- 1. In short, re-tell the story.**
- 2. Present the main characters of the story. What are they like?**
- 3. What do you think about the story and why?**
- 4. Where is the story set? Describe the setting and what importance it has for the story.**

Level 2

5. During which time is the story set and what importance do you think this has to the storyline? Explain in detail.
6. Through whose perspective is the story told?
7. How does the writer use language to portray feelings and set the mood? Give examples.
8. Which special type of genre is this story a part of? Give examples that prove this.

Cheat sheet – a written presentation of a book/story

1. Short presentation of a book/story

"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" is a book for young adults and is part of a series of popular books about the young wizard Harry Potter. It is written by J.K Rowling, a British author, not only known in her own country, but over the entire world.

2. Short summary of the story

Harry Potter is about a young orphan whose parents tragically died in a car accident. Harry is later proven to have magical powers and the readers get to follow him as he attends Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry. Along with some of his newfound friends at the school, Harry stumbles across many thrilling adventures.

3. Description of the main characters

The main characters of the book are Harry Potter, a young boy whose parents tragically died in a car accident. He possesses magic powers and is a strong leader who is not afraid to go his own way. Ron Weasley is Harry Potters best friend. Rons family is poor, but very loving and derive from a long line of wizzards. Ron as a person can be a little awkward, has a tendency to blush and has an obsessive fear of spiders. Hermione Granger is also one of Harry Potter's friends at Hogwarts. Her parents are muggles, which means people who lack magic powers. Despite this, she is one of the most talented students at Hogwarts and has an easy time learning the most difficult spells. These three friends encounter a whole lot of adventures together.

4. Description of the setting

The story is mainly set at Hogwarts, where Harry goes to school. It is an old building in the form of a castle, located on the hills in the north of England. If you are a muggle (lacking magic powers) the castle looks like a normal ruin. However, if you are a witch or a wizard, you are able to see the castle in its true

light. It is a grand building and consists of four student housings where the students live during the semesters.

5. Type of book

"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" is a book for young adults and belongs to the Fantasy genre. It is filled with fantasy and supernatural creatures. Despite a lot of new words and concepts, most people, old and young, seem to have an easy time connecting to the contents of the book. The adventure of the book follow one another, which makes it very difficult to stop reading the book once you have started.

6. Language

"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" is a book for all ages, although it is categorized as a book for young adults. The language is relatively simple, but contains a lot of new words and concepts. However, these do not create any obstacles for the reader to follow the story and the authors ability to keep the reader engaged with her imaginative descriptions of characters, events and settings is breathtaking.

7. Some important thoughts or problems in the book

"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" awakens many thoughts towards how people treat each other depending on where you come from. Things that we might take for granted, for example that all people have the same worth, and that we treat each other with respect, become evident that it might not always be this way.

We see our world with new eyes as we see that even here there are people who try to, for different reasons, oppress others without any apparent reason, aswell as all the good friends who are always there when you need them. In Harry Potter these individuals are very clearly portrayed and the way Harry and his friends act in the different situations they encounter lets us learn from their experiences and grow as individuals.

Exercise 2. Written presentation of the author Astrid Lindgren

Now you are going to tell us about the author behind the text you have just read. When you write about an author, remember not only to include the basic facts about him/her, but also the information that you find interesting. Originate from your own thoughts about the author and tell us about what the author has written. A good idea could be to plan your work and think about who your audience is going to be. What do you think your readers will be interested in learning, and how much do they already know about the author? Plan your work carefully and adjust your language according to the aim of your work and who your audience is.

Examples of what you can include in your presentation of the author:

Level 1

- **The authors childhood and upbringing**
- **The authors education and work experience**
- **Give examples of other work by the author and which genres these belong**
- **Explain what you think about the author's text and give reasons for your answer.**

Level 2

- How has the author's life and living affected his/her writing and how does the author affect us today?
- Describe the typical features for the author, for example genre, language (difficult words, slang, dialogues, rhyme, metaphores, repetition of themes etc.)

Find facts about the author

Facts about the author can sometimes be difficult to find if you only use biographies or history of literature. The libraries often help you to find information about more recent authors. They can help you find newspaper articles about your chosen author or give you examples of trustworthy internet sites.

Include examples of things that are typical for the author

In your presentation it would also be good if you use text examples and show what could be typical features for your chosen author's language aswell as contents in his/her stories.

Sources

Do not forget to include the sources you have used in your work. A list of sources should be included at the end of your work, where the readers can see exactly where you have found your facts in order to determine whether these are trustworthy or not.

Karin Boye
.....**IN MOTION**

The sated day is never first.
The best day is a day of thirst.

Yes, there is goal and meaning in our path -
but it's the way that is the labour's worth.

The best goal is a night-long rest,
fire lit, and bread broken in haste.

In places where one sleeps but once,
sleep is secure, dreams full of songs.

Strike camp, strike camp! The new day shows its light.
Our great adventure has no end in sight.

Translation by: David McDuff

Source: [<http://www.halldor.demon.co.uk/hearth.htm>]

FROM A BAD GIRL

I hope you're having a rotten time.
I hope you're lying awake like I am,
and feeling strangely glad and stirred
and dizzy and anxious and very disturbed.

and suddenly you'll hurry up
to settle down and sleep like a top.
I hope it takes you longer than you think...
I hope you don't even get a wink!

Translation by: David McDuff

Source: [<http://www.halldor.demon.co.uk/hearth.htm>]

YES, OF COURSE IT HURTS For the Tree's Sake (1935)

Yes, of course it hurts when buds are breaking.
Why else would the springtime falter?
Why would all our ardent longing
bind itself in frozen, bitter pallor?
After all, the bud was covered all the winter.
What new thing is it that bursts and wears?
Yes, of course it hurts when buds are breaking,
hurts for that which grows
and that which bars.

Yes, it is hard when drops are falling.
Trembling with fear, and heavy hanging,
cleaving to the twig, and swelling, sliding -
weight draws them down, though they go on clinging.
Hard to be uncertain, afraid and divided,
hard to feel the depths attract and call,
yet sit fast and merely tremble -
hard to want to stay
and want to fall.

Then, when things are worst and nothing helps
the tree's buds break as in rejoicing,
then, when no fear holds back any longer,
down in glitter go the twig's drops plunging,
forget that they were frightened by the new,
forget their fear before the flight unfurled -
feel for a second their greatest safety,
rest in that trust
that creates the world.

Translation by: David McDuff

Source: [<http://www.halldor.demon.co.uk/tree.htm>]

**THAT HOUR** For the Tree's Sake (1935)

No breathless summer night sky
reaches so far into eternity,
no lake, when the mists lighten,
mirrors such stillness
as that hour -

when loneliness's limits are effaced
and the eyes become transparent
and the voices become simple as winds
and there is nothing more to hide.
How can I now be afraid?
I shall never lose you.

Translation by: David McDuff

Source: [<http://www.halldor.demon.co.uk/tree.htm>]

Text and author: A selection of poems by Karin Boye

- Exercises:**
- 1. Presentation of poem**
 - 2. Write your own poem**
 - 3. Presentation of an author**
-

Poem exercise 1 – presentation of poem

- Choose one of the poems.
- Re-write it on a nice piece of paper.
- Motivate your choice of poem.
- Make an interpretation of the poem and describe what thoughts you have about it. (You make use the questions below as a guideline for your interpretations and presentation).
- Illustrate your interpretation and your thought with a picture, a photo or a drawing.

Level 1

- 1. What is the name of the poem and the author?**
- 2. What is the mood like in the poem?**
- 3. For whom is the poem written? Is it intended for a special person? In which case, who?**
- 4. By whom is it written? (Whose thoughts, opinions, feelings and experiences do you think the poem is about? Give some examples!)**
- 5. Is there any description of the setting in the poem? If there is, describe where the poem is set.**
- 6. Why did you choose this particular poem?**
- 7. What thoughts or feelings does it evoke in you?**
- 8. What do you think Karin Boye wants to depict in her poem? What message does she want to deliver?**

Level 2

1. When it comes to the structure of the poem – is it structured in a certain way? Does it have stanzas or verses? Do you think the structure affects the contents?
2. Does the author use specific words to reinforce his/her message? If this is the case, which words? Do you think it works well? Give examples and motivate your answer.
3. Are there any similies or metaphores in the poem? Give examples and explain how you think this affects the structure and contents.

Poem exercise 2 – Write your own poem

It is now time for you as a student to write your own poem. It can sometimes be a little difficult to get started, however there are a few tricks.

Prior to writing your poem you can decide on its content and then create different support frames:

- Decide on the length of the poem. It can for example be four lines, or 146 lines, if you should like!
- Decide what it should be about. It can be about longing, fear, love, cars, thirst, jealousy, guineapigs, friendship, nature, happiness, loneliness, parents etc.
- Should the poem rhyme or not? You decide!

Work:

- Write your own poem. You may need to re-write it a couple of times to get it exactly the way you want it.
- Re-write it on nice paper.
- Illustrate your poem with a picture, photo or a drawing.

Exercise 3. Written presentation of the author Karin Boye

Now you are going to tell us about the author behind the text you have just read. When you write about an author, remember not only to include the basic facts about him/her, but also the information that you find interesting. Originate from your own thoughts about the author and tell us about what the author has written. A good idea could be to plan your work and think about who your audience is going to be. What do you think your readers will be interested in learning, and how much do they already know about the author? Plan your work carefully and adjust your language according to the aim of your work and who your audience is.

Examples of what you can include in your presentation of the author:

Level 1

- **The authors childhood and upbringing**
- **The authors education and work experience**
- **Give examples of other work by the author and which genres these belong**
- **Explain what you think about the author's text and why you think this.**

Level 2

- How has the author's life and living affected his/her writing and how does the author affect us today?
- Describe the typical features for the author, for example genre, language (difficult words, slang, dialogues, rhyme, metaphors, repetition of themes etc.)

Find facts about the author

Facts about the author can sometimes be difficult to find if you only use biographies or history of literature. The libraries often help you to find information about more recent authors. They can help you find newspaper articles about your chosen author or give you examples of trustworthy internet sites.

Include examples of things that are typical for the author

In your presentation it would also be good if you use text examples and show what could be typical features for your chosen author's language as well as contents in his/her stories.

Sources

Do not forget to include the sources you have used in your work. A list of sources should be included at the end of your work, where the readers can see exactly where you have found your facts in order to determine whether these are trustworthy or not.

Stig Dagerman

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To Kill a Child

by Stig Dagerman (194

It's a peaceful day as sunlight settles onto the fields of the plain. Soon bells will be ringing, because today is Sunday. Between fields of rye, two children have just come upon a footpath that they have never taken before, and in the three villages along the plain, windowpanes glisten in the sun. Men shave before mirrors propped on kitchen tables, women hum as they slice up cinnamon bread for the morning meal, and children sit on kitchen floors, buttoning the fronts of their shirts. This is the pleasant morning of an evil day, because on this day a child will be killed in the third village by a cheerful man. Yet the child still sits on the kitchen floor, buttoning his shirt. And the man who is still shaving talks of the day ahead, of their rowing trip down the creek. And still humming, the woman places the freshly cut bread on a blue plate.

No shadows pass over the kitchen, and yet even now the man who will kill the child stands near a red gas pump in the first village. He's a cheerful man, looking through the viewfinder of his camera, framing a shot of a small blue car and a young woman who stands beside it, laughing. As the woman laughs and the man snaps the charming picture, the attendant screws their gas cap on tightly. He tells them it looks like a good day for a drive. The woman gets into the car, and the man who will kill the child pulls out his wallet. He tells the attendant they're driving to the sea. He says when they reach the sea they'll rent a boat and row far, far out. Through her open window, the woman in the front seat hears his words. She settles back and closes her eyes. And with her eyes closed she sees the sea and the man sitting beside her in a boat. He's not an evil man, he's carefree and cheerful. Before he climbs into the car, he stands for a moment in front of the grille, which gleams in the sun, and he enjoys the mixed aroma of gasoline and lilacs. No shadows fall over the car, and its shiny bumper has no dents, nor is it red with blood.

But just as the man in the first village climbs into his car and slams the door shut, and as he is reaching down to pull out the choke, the woman in the third village opens her kitchen cupboard and finds that she has no sugar. The child, who has finished buttoning his shirt and has tied his shoes, kneels on a couch and sees the stream winding between the alders, pictures the black rowboat pulled up into the tall grass of the bank. The man who will lose his child has finished shaving and is just now closing his portable mirror. Coffee cups, cinnamon bread, cream, and flies each have a place on the table. Only the sugar is missing. And so the mother tells her child to run over to the Larssons' to borrow a little. As the child opens the door, the man calls after him, urging him to hurry, because the boat lies waiting for them on the bank of the creek, and today they will row much, much further than they ever have before. Running through the yard, the child can think of nothing else but the stream and the boat and the fish that jump from the water. And no one whispers to the child that he has only eight minutes to live and that the boat will lie where it is today and for many days to come.

It isn't far to the Larssons'. It's only across the road. And just as the child is crossing that road, the small blue car is speeding through the second village. It's a tiny village, with humble red houses and newly awakened people who sit in their kitchens with raised coffee cups. They look out over their hedges and see the car rush past, a large cloud of dust rising behind it. The car moves fast, and from behind the steering wheel, the man catches glimpses of apple trees and newly tarred telephone poles slipping past like gray shadows. Summer breathes through their open windows, and as they rush out of the second village their car hugs the road, riding safely, surely, in the middle. They are alone on this road--so far. It's a peaceful thing, to drive completely alone on a broad road. And as they move out onto the open plain, that feeling of peace settles deeper. The man is strong and contented, and with his right elbow he can feel the woman's body. He's not a bad man. He's in a hurry to get to the sea. He wouldn't hurt even the simplest creature, and yet, still, he will soon kill a child. As they rush on toward the third village, the woman again shuts her eyes, pretending those eyes will not open again until they can look on the sea. In time with the car's gentle swaying, she dreams about the calm, lapping tide, the peaceful, mirrored surface of the sea.

Because life is constructed in such a merciless fashion, even one minute before a cheerful man kills a child he can still feel entirely at ease, and only one minute before a woman screams out in horror she can close her eyes and dream of the sea, and during the last minute of that child's life his parents can sit in a kitchen waiting for sugar, talking casually about the child's white teeth and the rowing trip they have planned, and that child himself can close a gate and begin to cross a road, holding in his right hand a few cubes of sugar wrapped up in white paper, and for the whole of that minute he can see nothing but a clear stream with big fish and a wide-bottomed boat with silent oars.

Afterward, everything is too late. Afterward, there is a blue car stopped sideways in the road, and a screaming woman takes her hand from her mouth, and it's dark with blood. Afterward, a man opens a car door and tries to stand on his legs, even though he has a pit of horror within him. Afterward, a few sugar cubes are strewn meaninglessly about in the blood and gravel, and a child lies motionless on its stomach, its face pressed heavily against the road. Afterward, two pale people, who have not yet had their coffee, come running through a gate to see a sight in the road they will never forget. Because it's not true that time heals all wounds. Time does not heal the wounds of a killed child, and it heals very poorly the pain of a mother who forgot to buy sugar and who sent her child across the road to borrow some. And it heals just as poorly the anguish of a once-cheerful man who has killed a child.

Because the man who has killed a child does not go to the sea. The man who has killed a child drives home slowly, in silence. And beside him sits a mute woman with a bandaged hand. And as they drive back through the villages, they do not see even one friendly face—all shadows, everywhere, are very dark. And when they part, it is in the deepest silence. And the man who has killed a child knows that this silence is his enemy, and that he will need years of his life to conquer it by crying out that it wasn't his fault. But he also knows that this is a lie. And in the fitful dreams of his nights he will try instead to gain back just a single minute of his life, to somehow make that single minute different.



But life is so merciless to the man who has killed a child that everything afterward is too late.

Translated by Steven Hartman, with Lo Dagerman

Source: [<http://www.dagerman.us/>]

Text and author: *To kill a child* by Stig Dagerman

Assignments for the short story:

- 1. Reading comprehension**
- 2. Writing**
- 3. Present an author**

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Reading comprehension level 1

- 1. What did you think about the short story?**
- 2. What feelings does the short story evoke?**
- 3. What is the short story about?**
- 4. Describe the scenery from the short story. (Where does it take place?)**
- 5. Describe the little boy.**
- 6. Describe the man who is driving the car.**
- 7. How do you interpret the title?**
- 8. Do you think the short story is easy or difficult to read? What is the reason for this?**

Reading comprehension level 2

1. What is the mood like in the beginning of the short story?
2. What caught your attention the most when reading the story?
3. Select a couple of sentences or paragraphs that you reacted specifically upon.
4. What in the text enables you to state that the boy is very young?
5. What techniques does the author use to create suspense?
6. How does this effect you as a reader?
7. Where in the short story does the speed of the narrator suddenly change (become quicker) and why is this?
8. What do you think the author wants to say with this short story? What is his message?

2. Writing

Choose one of the following exercises:

1. Write a news article where you are the reporter who is writing about the accident.
2. Choose the part of the short story that captured your attention the most. Rewrite this part into a poem.
3. Write your own short story where you use the same writing technique as Stig Dagerman has in the short story *To kill a child*.

Exercise 3. A written presentation of the author Stig Dagerman

Now you are going to tell us about the author behind the text you have just read. When you write about an author, remember not only to include the basic facts about him/her, but also the information that you find interesting. Originate from your own thoughts about the author and tell us about what the author has written. A good idea could be to plan your work and think about who your audience is going to be. What do you think your readers will be interested in learning, and how much do they already know about the author? Plan your work carefully and adjust your language according to the aim of your work and who your audience is.

Examples of what you can include in your presentation of the author:

Level 1

- **The authors childhood and upbringing**
- **The authors education and work experience**
- **Give examples of other work by the author and which genres these belong**
- **Explain what you think about the author's text and why you think this.**

Level 2

- How has the author's life and living affected his/her writing and how does the author affect us today?
- Describe the typical features for the author, for example genre, language (difficult words, slang, dialogues, rhyme, metaphors, repetition of themes etc.)

Find facts about the author

Facts about the author can sometimes be difficult to find if you only use biographies or history of literature. The libraries often help you to find information about more recent authors. They can help you find newspaper articles about your chosen author or give you examples of trustworthy internet sites.

Include examples of things that are typical for the author

In your presentation it would also be good if you use text examples and show what could be typical features for your chosen author's language as well as contents in his/her stories.

Sources

Do not forget to include the sources you have used in your work. A list of sources should be included at the end of your work, where the readers can see exactly where you have found your facts in order to determine whether these are trustworthy or not.